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REPORT OF A COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF
VERMONT APPOINTED ON March 13, 1778, TO CONFER WITH A
COMMITTEE REPRESENTING THE INHABITANTS OF A PART
OF THE COUNTIES OF GRAFTON AND CHESHIRE, N.H.

On July 31, 1776, a convention of the Committees of Safety of a number of Grafton County, New Hampshire, towns was held at College Hall, Dresden, N. H. The reason for this convention was the growing dissatisfaction among the towns in the Connecticut River Valley at the lack of representation which they were allowed in the New Hampshire Assembly. The movement then inaugurated progressed until some forty towns in Grafton and Cheshire Counties, N. H., had become alienated from the established New Hampshire government, the seat of which was at Exeter. Coincidentally with this movement steps were under way on the west side of the Connecticut River for the formation of a new state out of the New Hampshire grants. As early as January, 1777, Colonel John Wheelock, son of Eleazer Wheelock, President of Dartmouth College, approached a committee of men acting on the Vermont proposition with the suggestion that some of the towns on the east side of the River should be permitted to unite with them, but nothing definite was done until the first General Assembly of the State of Vermont met at Windsor on March 12, 1778, when a delegation from the united committees appointed by some sixteen New Hampshire towns came before the Vermont legislature to propose that Vermont take into the union the sixteen towns that were then represented in the united committees.

On March 13, 1778, the Vermont General Assembly voted:

"To choose a committee out of the Assembly & Council to wait on the committee from the east side of Connecticut River:- committee chosen from the Assembly, Col. Barrett, Capt. John Fassett, Doct. Reuben Jones, & Capt. Curtiss; from the Council, Doct. Jonas Fay, Capt. Ira Allen, & Col. Peter Olcott. (Journal Vermont General Assembly, Slade p. 258).

Under date of March 16 this committee after conference with the New Hampshire committee reported that the union should not "at this time" be formed, but that future application for such union might be considered.

The Assembly Journal notes no specific action on this report, but on March 18, 1778 (Slade, p.261) the Assembly voted:

"That the proposals & preliminaries exhibited to this house by a committee representing a number of towns on the New Hampshire Grants, east of Connecticut River, relative to forming a union between said Grants & this State, be laid before the people of this State, at large, for their consideration & determination".

At the second session of the Vermont General Assembly at Bennington in June 1778 the matter of the union again came up, and on June 10 the Assembly voted (Slade, p.270):

"That there be a committee appointed to count the votes, or make a list of those towns that voted for the union.

"That Col. Barret, Capt. Ira Allen & Col. Peter Olcott, be the committee for the aforesaid purpose".

In the afternoon of the same day the Assembly voted:

"To take a vote of the Assembly at 8 o'clock, tomorrow morning, respecting the union".

On Thursday, June 11, 1778, the Vermont General Assembly voted (Slade, p. 271):

"That the union takes place 37 in the affirmative & 12 in the negative, respecting the above union. Voted, That the bill presented to this House, in conjunction with the union, be accepted and passed".

The figures in the foregoing vote are understood to refer to the number of Vermont towns which had voted respectively in favor and against the union.

On Monday, June 15, 1778, on petition of "Rev. Doct. Wheelock" the Assembly voted (Slade, p. 273):

"To take the incorporated university of Dartmouth, under the patronage of this state. Voted, that the Rev. Doct. Eleazar Wheelock, be appointed, & commissioned, as a Justice of the Peace, for said incorporated society".

At the third session of the Vermont General Assembly held at Windsor in October, 1778, the New Hampshire towns which had accepted the union were represented, but powerful influences were now combined to oppose the union. These were to be found in the New Hampshire government and in the hostility of the Bennington leaders to the proposed union, which they had failed to prevent, and in the activity of New York, which now combined with New Hampshire to force action against the new state in the Continental Congress.

On October 12, 1778 (Slade, p.278) the Assembly voted that the Governor and Council be requested to join with the Assembly on the next day in consideration of a letter from Hon. Meshech Weare, President of the Council of New Hampshire. The matter was considered in committee of the whole on October 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 19. On October 20 the Assembly approved the report of a joint committee with reference to the union, and ordered that portions of it be transmitted to the Continental Congress and the New Hampshire Council. (Slade, pp.280-281).

The full text of this report is to be found in Slade, p.295. The report adhered to the union, but proposed a limitation which if unacceptable to New Hampshire, should be referred to Congress or to the courts for a decision, but on October 21 the Assembly (Slade, pp. 97-99) refused to include the New Hampshire towns within the Vermont counties as previously established, or to erect them into a distinct county by themselves, whereupon the minority, consisting of representatives from the New Hampshire towns and those from a few Vermont towns, drew up a protest and withdrew from the Assembly, leaving barely a quorum to finish the business of the session (Slade, pp. 99-101 and 283), and on October 23, the day before the final adjournment, the Assembly voted (Slade, p.284):

"That the Representatives of this Assembly lay before their constituents the circumstances of the union subsisting between 16 towns, on the east side of Connecticut River and the former State of Vermont, and to be instructed by them to act accordingly."

The preceding action, although it did not constitute a formal dissolution of the union, was thereafter treated as a practical dissolution, and it was not until 1781, after continued agitation, that a further union between the New Hampshire towns and Vermont was finally consummated and continued in effect for some months.

The attached manuscript is the official record of the first official committee to consider the foregoing union, and so far as known has never been printed, although many other documents in connection with the transaction have come to light and are to be found in print. (See Slade Vermont State Papers and Collections of Vermont Historical Society, and Governor & Council, Vol. I, Appendix G.)

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